

The Rail Freight Hub

COMMENTS FROM SPALDING & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY

Consultation - It must be questioned whether the material provided for consultation is adequate for anyone to come to an informed conclusion. In particular, for example, there is the lack of a) information about other similar hubs and their consequences; and b) a study of the impact of increased traffic on the local road system.

General - 1. The Society supports the principle of transferring freight from road to rail.
2. We recognise the possible contribution of a rail freight interchange to strengthening the local economy.
3. The Deeping Fen location seems to meet the criteria adopted.

Doubts and Reservations - 1. There is the fundamental question raised by John Hayes: "Does the future really lie with distribution centres as an economic model? ... Shouldn't we be going back to the days when goods were produced locally and consumed locally?" (*Spalding Guardian*, 04.02.10)

2. To be economically viable there needs to be a back-load for the continental produce being brought in by train; and it is not clear what that back-load might be. Fresh vegetables and chilled produce supplied for a just-in-time supermarket regime do not, we understand, lend themselves to rail transport.

3. A large industrial estate – not simply an interchange – is being envisaged. It is difficult to justify locating this in open countryside and on undesignated land. It would seem to be a clear breach of **Policies SG1, SG4 and EC1** of the Local Plan (2006). Indeed, as the development is economic-development-led rather than planning-led, it would seem to breach the whole principle of town and country planning, thus setting a seriously unfortunate precedent (which wind farm companies, for example, would be quick to exploit).

4. The environmental impact would be considerable:

- a) Increased traffic (admitted, unquantified and unexamined), work-force & HGVs.
- b) No amount of perimeter landscaping could mitigate the visual intrusion of the stores and packing sheds that would grow up round the interchange on the "future development" land – think Wardentree Lane.
- c) Noise and light pollution.

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All these issues would need to be researched and then weighed very carefully against the possible benefits of an interchange, if a wise decision is to be reached. Unfortunately, in what seems to be the rush to bring the matter to committee, it is difficult to see this happening. Arguments to the contrary notwithstanding, we believe this is much too important a matter for the Council simply to dance to Network Rail's timetable.